

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 1946 without my signature.

California's current structure of water quality enforcement has systemic problems that must be addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion. Last year, I asked the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) to analyze the current structure and procedures of the state and regional water boards and develop a package of reforms that will result in improvements in the implementation and enforcement of our water quality laws. That package of reforms was delivered to the Legislature earlier this year and was never acted upon.

This bill misses the mark because increasing the frequency and severity of civil penalties via the court system is not the truest measure of our success in addressing water quality in California. The courts are an effective tool, but they are not the only tool that should be used to ensure clean water.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on increasing the accountability, consistency, and effectiveness of the regional and state boards. Doing so ensures that we create a system that lays out a clear path to compliance with our water quality laws, without having to resort to the courts.

This is an important issue and I encourage the author and the Legislature to address it in a comprehensive fashion in the next legislative session.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger